Design Tools for Improving Downtown Economic Performance

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Design
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Design Tools for Improving Downtown Economic Performance

This is a condensed version of the original presentation.

Community Design Advisory Program

- a statewide Partnership Program of the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs
    - established in 1987
    - a national award-winning model
    - more than 40 communities served
    - small rural to large urban and suburban communities

Community
Design Advisory Program

Community Design Advisory Program

▶ a professional cross-disciplinary design team

- urban design

- architecture

- landscape architecture

- interior and merchandising design

- graphic, signage and wayfinding design

- historic preservation

Community
Design Advisory Program

Community Design Advisory Program: **Strengths**

- build motivated public-private partnerships
- foster shared vision and active participation
- manage the entire user experience, from pre-entry to return
- harmonize and optimize all community design systems
- provide low-cost, tailored design recommendations

Community
Design Advisory Program

Community Design Advisory Program: **Process**

- a three-day on-site process
  - Day 1: Design Audit
  - Day 2: Town Meeting
  - Day 3: Design Clinic

Community
Design Advisory Program

The Design Tips
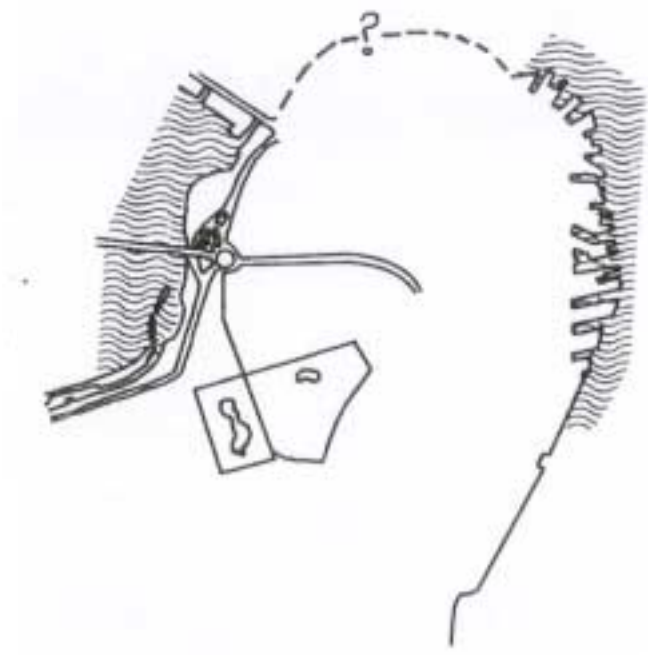
- Turn Drivers into Pedestrians
- Improve Your Civic Image
- Direct the Driver's Eyes to Blockscapes
- Expose the Business Mix
- Create a Pedestrian-Friendly Streetscape
- Move Pedestrians Over the Retail Threshold
- Manage the Building Inventory
- Competitively Differentiate Your City
- Carefully Construct the Change Process

Turn Drivers into Pedestrians

◉ Manage all aspects of the user experience from pre-entry, entry, arrival, docking, cycling and exit to return.

- - Consider what happens:
  - - at the edges
  - - along the pathways;
  - - at the nodes;
  - - in the districts; and
  - - at the landmarks

  of the city.

  (- Kevin Lynch)

Turn Drivers into Pedestrians

Develop a recognizable program of municipal signage ("wayfinding")
to call out public amenities… most importantly, parking.

Turn Drivers into Pedestrians

- Logically identify public parking venues so they are easy to find upon leaving.

Improve Your Civic Image

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  - Create visual landmarks and images that are memorable.

Direct the Driver's Eyes to Blockscapes

○ Remove signs from the sides of buildings and from above the roof line.

Direct the Driver's Eyes to Blockscapes

◉ Replace crude hand-made signs with machine-made or artisan signs.

Direct the Driver's Eyes to Blockscapes

- Paint all sides of freestanding or corner buildings the same color to increase a sense of mass and volume.

Direct the Driver's Eyes to Blockscapes

○ When repainting façades, be considerate of the streetscape, and neighbors: immediate, across the street and down the block.

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○ When repainting façades, be considerate of the streetscape, and neighbors: immediate, across the street and down the block.

- When painting buildings with some exposed natural materials (like brick), select an accent color from the opposite side of the spectrum.

Expose the Business Mix

- Utilize business directory maps to inform consumers of the available goods and services.

Expose the Business Mix

○ The canopies of street trees should not block the view of storefronts and business signs.

Create a Pedestrian-friendly Streetscape

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Move Pedestrians Over the Retail Threshold

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Move Pedestrians Over the Retail Threshold

- Provide signage, both public and business, for pedestrians as well as drivers.
  - Consider signage an integral part of the façade.

Move Pedestrians Over the Retail Threshold

- Keep store windows free of posters and signs, and make sure they are well-lighted from within.

Move Pedestrians Over the Retail Threshold

○ While rear façades to businesses don't need to mimic the front façade, the use of similar colors and materials reinforces the store's "brand."
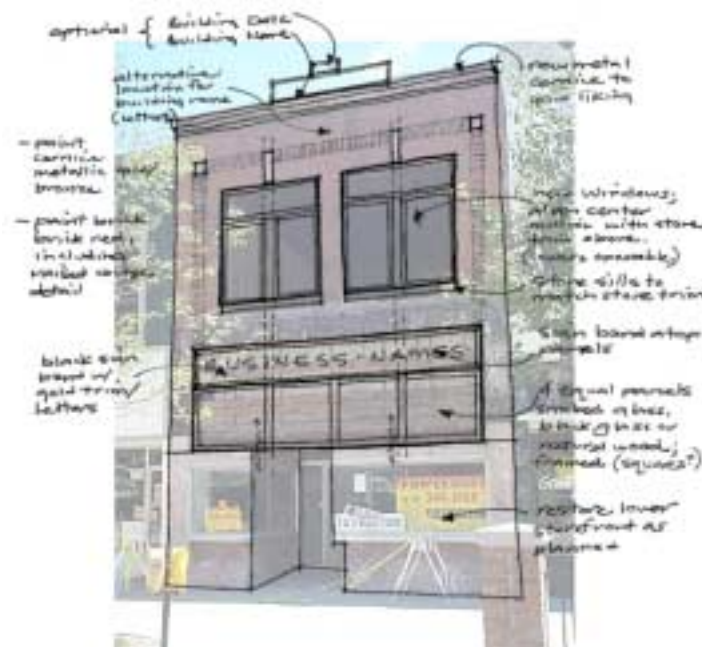
Manage the Building Inventory

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- Define buildings as either foreground or background buildings and renovate them accordingly.

Manage the Building Inventory

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  - Remove any anachronistic elements that detract from the integrity or character of the original building.

Manage the Building Inventory

- Awnings should be used only where it is necessary to shade windows from the sun.
  - Awnings are not signs.

Manage the Building Inventory

○ Awnings should be used only where it is necessary to shade windows from the sun.

 - The geometry of any awnings should work with the character of the façade.

Manage the Building Inventory

○ Unify the façades by reuniting the upper and lower portions.

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- The result will be the restoration of the verticality of historic façades and, collectively, the original majesty of the blockscape.
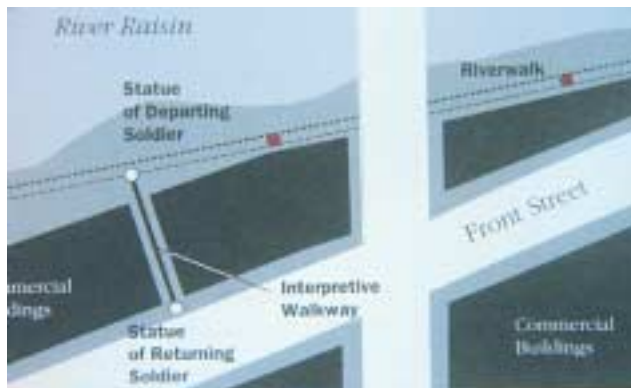
Competitively Differentiate Your City

◉ Find a basis to identify and promote your community and capitalize on it.

Competitively Differentiate Your City

▸ Consider a program of public artwork for parks, waterfronts and other strategic locations in the city that reinforces this identity.

Competitively Differentiate Your City

- Civic identities should NOT rely on "themes," but may incorporate elements that reflect the region and its citizens.

Carefully Construct the Change Process

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- Involve and empower end users and private sector stakeholders in change planning and implementation.

Carefully Construct the Change Process

- Manage the entire design continuum: from ads and web site, to gateways, corridors, signs and exterior and interior environments, and the merchandising at the point-of-purchase.

Carefully Construct the Change Process

- Seek to develop guidelines that can be implemented by the entire spectrum of stakeholders.

Ask Yourselves:

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- And, if you could charge each person who entered your city $5, what would you do with the money?

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- And, if you could charge each person who entered your city $5, what would you do with the money?

  - What are your priorities? Stick with them.

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